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## The Cully Park Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden: Place-making Through Indigenous Eco-cultural Reclamation

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**The Cully Park Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden:**  
*Place-making Through Indigenous Eco-cultural Reclamation*

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of Master of Science degree in Geography  
Portland State University

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**The Cully Park Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden:**  
*Place-making Through Indigenous Eco-cultural Reclamation*



Participants in the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden blessing ceremony walking east<sup>1</sup>

**Introduction**

*I follow loose groups of people along the grassy berm. The chill air gnaws through my parka, like the icy teeth of Mt. Hood, which dominates the Eastern horizon. We are walking through what will become the Cully Park Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden in order to participate in a blessing ceremony; once again I wonder if I should even be here.<sup>2</sup>*

There is a new landscape at the north end of Portland, Oregon, part of the nascent Cully Park, which has become a nexus of neighborhood sense of place. Located in the park's northwest corner is the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden (ITGG). The Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden's design mission is to provide the Portland Native community and tribes whose ceded land includes the Cully Park site with a place to commune, cultivate indigenous foods and materials for cultural practices and traditions, and revitalize the associated knowledge, skills and ethics. According to the site's co-management draft plan "This process collaborates with the

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<sup>1</sup> All photographs and maps by author, unless otherwise cited. All map data from Metro (2014) unless otherwise cited.

<sup>2</sup> Reflections found throughout the paper are an attempt to express some of my personal, subjective experiences during the Cully Park Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden (ITGG) second annual land blessing ceremony, held on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013. Unlike the other community gardens operated by the City of Portland, the ITGG is a space designed specifically for eco-cultural reclamation activities tied to the regional landscapes and indigenous cultures. I was invited to participate, and any interested community members were welcomed.

local tribes that have lived here since time immemorial and the diverse urban community that represents over 380 tribes and bands from across the nation” (Zierdt and Watters 2014, 2).

Though there are other successful indigenous gathering garden projects in the U.S. (Middleton 2011), this project in particular highlights the complex and far-ranging process involved in place-making, prompting many questions in the process. In what ways does the interplay between *structure* and *agency*—particularly non-human agency—factor into the creation of what we identify as *place*? Does the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden exhibit traits of relational, heterogeneous, or heterotopic space as described by geographers operating within various post-structuralist frameworks? Finally, how does the traditional ecological knowledge informing the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden relate to *placelessness*, and in what ways can a post-structuralist geographic approach help address these questions while avoiding the specter of environmental determinism?<sup>3</sup>

Portland's history and geography are patterned, like any city, by spatial imaginings both utopian and dystopian. This examination of the raw landscape of the city's nascent garden space in Cully Park is an attempt to research a third manifestation of space, one that might be called *heterotopia*. This research into the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden is a search for a more complete accounting of *place*, one which also acknowledges the variety of non-human agencies (a list which would include streets, planning documents, various plants, historical accounts, and even the consistent boundaries of the space itself) found in all heterogeneous social arrangements.

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<sup>3</sup> *Environmental determinism* is the idea that the landscape associated with a particular culture, rather than social conditions, determines that people's cultural evolution.

Cully Park and the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden are in the Cully Neighborhood, in central Northeast Portland (Figure 1) (also see appendices A through C). A recent Portland State University study, performed in partnership with local development groups, explains what makes Cully a fascinating neighborhood:

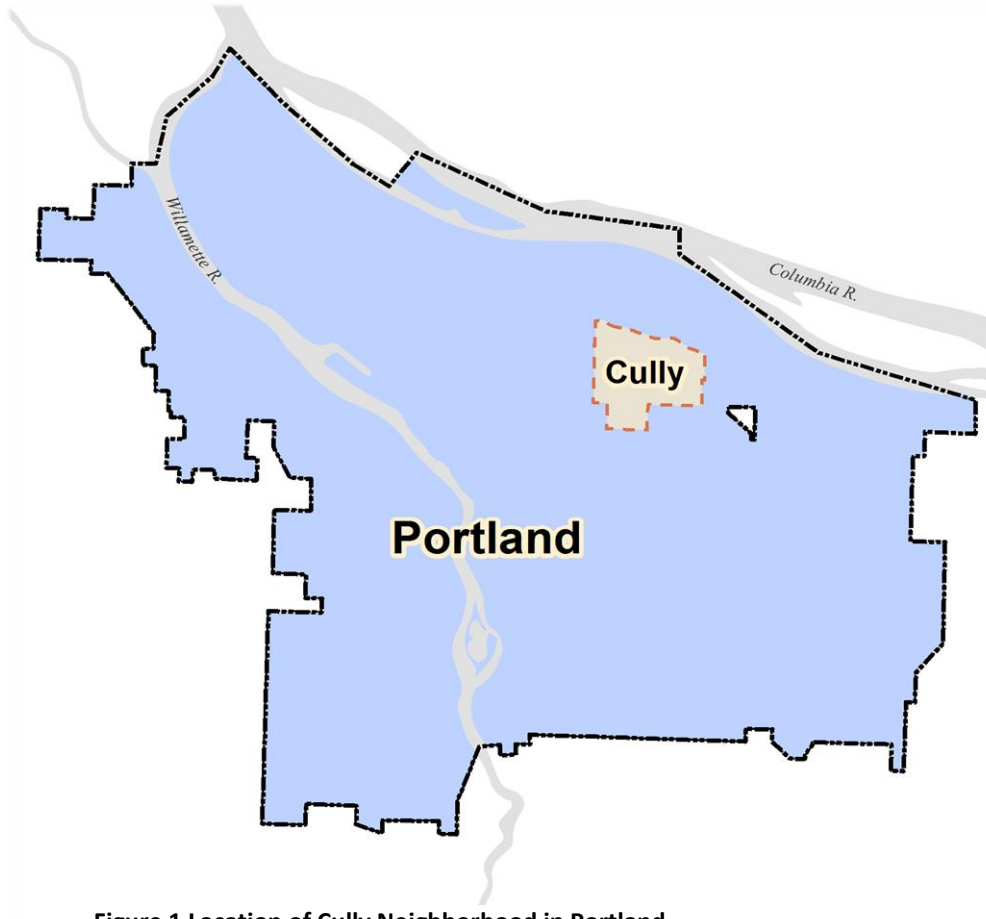
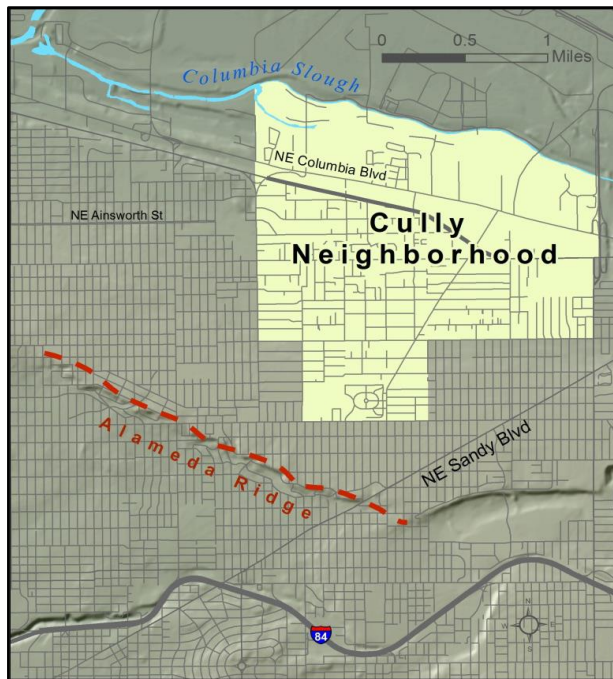


Figure 1 Location of Cully Neighborhood in Portland

Cully is a neighborhood shared by individuals and groups from different backgrounds. Cully holds a rich cross-cultural history, including the thriving pre-colonial Neerchokikoo Indian Village near the Columbia Slough and settlement by early American immigrant farmers. Newly-arrived immigrants, entrepreneurs, retirees, urban farmers and the working poor all coexist in Cully, a heterogeneous mix of people that cannot be easily classified (Banuelos et al. 2013, 10).

Cully's landscape lies between the major physical features of the Columbia Slough to the

north, and Alameda Ridge to the south (Figure 2a). The neighborhood is generally bounded on the west by NE 42<sup>nd</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Avenues, on the north by Cornfoot Road, on the east by NE 62<sup>nd</sup> and 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenues, and on the south by Fremont and Prescott Streets (Figure 2b).



**Figure 2a Major physical geographic features surrounding Cully**



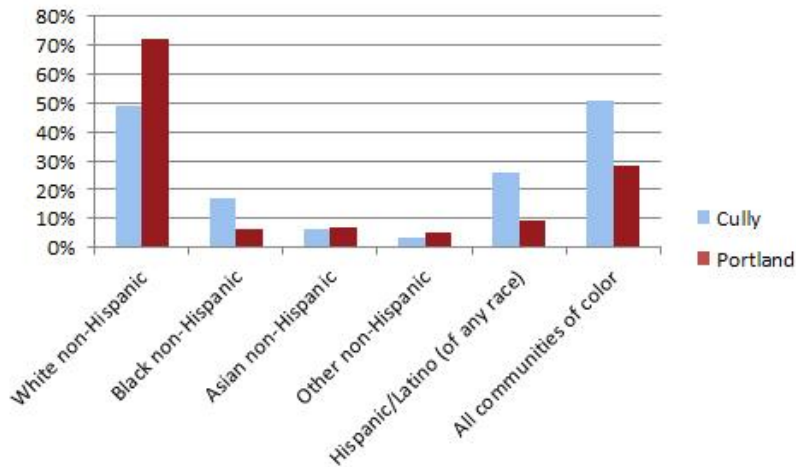
**Figure 2b Major Streets in Relation to the ITGG**

At 2,008 acres, Cully is the largest neighborhood in Portland's northeast district<sup>4</sup>, with a total population of 13,209 people. The neighborhood experienced a recent increase in total population between the 2000 and 2010 censuses<sup>5</sup>, at the same time experiencing a growth in the non-White population. Cully is currently one of the most racially diverse places in Portland: 58% of the population is white, 21% of the remaining population is Hispanic, 16% is black, and 6% is Asian or Pacific Islander. These numbers are particularly striking when compared directly

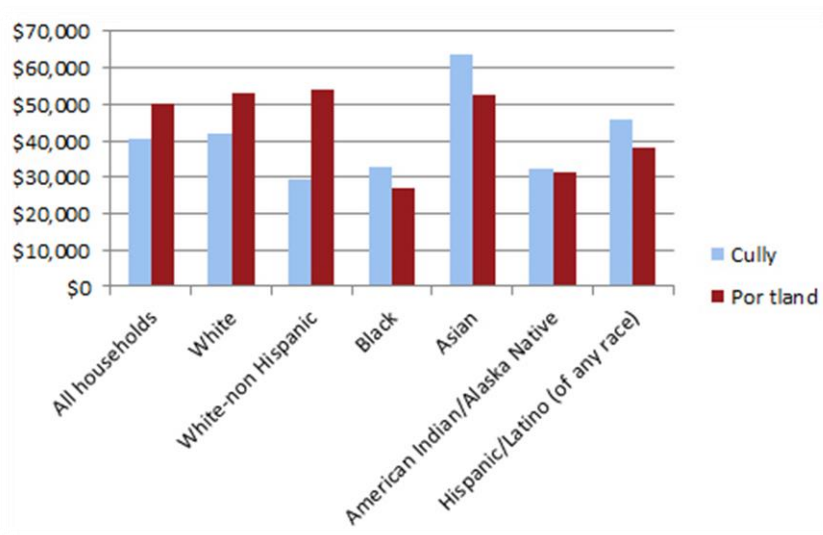
<sup>4</sup> See pages 29-30 for information about Portland's neighborhood system.

<sup>5</sup> All demographic figures from the U.S. Census (2010) unless otherwise cited.

to Portland averages (Figure 3a). Median household income of Cully residents is \$40,483, compared to Portland's \$50,177. Interestingly, even though 26% of Cully residents live below the national poverty line, non-White groups living there seem to fare better than similar groups city-wide (Figure 3b).



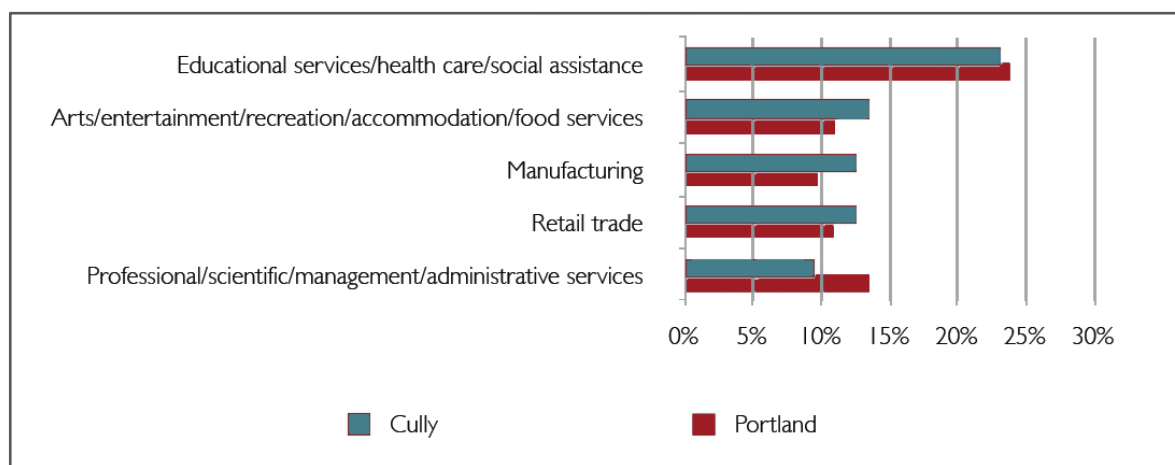
**Figure 3a Comparison of Racial Diversity in Cully and Portland.**



**Figure 3b Comparison of Median Annual Household Incomes by Racial Group in Cully and Portland.**

While 53% of Cully's land is zoned for residential development, only 2% of the

remaining land is zoned as commercial, resulting in limited opportunities for business services within the neighborhood (although the city has recently addressed this situation by rezoning NE Cully Blvd in order to allow for development as a “main street” (City of Portland 2014a)). The majority of remaining non-residential land is zoned for industrial purposes (37%). Cully is at the northeast corner of the Portland school district, and is home to seven public or private schools of



**Figure 4 Top Five Employment Fields for Cully Residents**

varying grade levels, including the school operated by the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA Family Center). Employment among residents is similar to that of the trends in greater Portland, but Cully residents are generally less likely to be employed in professional or white-collar industries, and are more likely to work in service industries (Figure 4). Cully has suffered regular disinvestment<sup>6</sup> since its annexation by Portland in 1985 (Banuelos et al. 2013), and has recently been identified as one of the neighborhoods most vulnerable to gentrification (Bates 2013). In response to this situation, groups local to the area have taken responsibility by implementing a variety of potentially groundbreaking projects. Some prominent examples include Columbia Biogas (a renewable energy plant), the Clara Vista affordable housing

<sup>6</sup> *Disinvestment* refers to the withdrawal of investment funds from an area, usually by government agencies.



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complex (rehabilitation of 133 multi-family housing units), and Cully Park (converting vacant land into a recreational and eco-cultural public space) (DeFalco 2013b). The Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden, the subject of this research, resides on the Cully Park site.



The new community garden below the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden Site.

### **Theoretical Framework**

*I look back in the direction we came from, to the community garden at the base of the rise. Though the space is quiet this late into November--ripe vegetables have already been picked and the remaining plants are wilting under an unseasonably dry cold--it is an obvious testament to the work already invested by community members. That garden will reward the work and commitment in the years to come, and the entire community will benefit. But the shivering circle forming in the grassy field is here for a different reason. Similar, yet fundamentally different.*

#### Sense of Place, Sense of Placelessness

Humanist geographers have established a rich body of theory describing anthropocentric recognition and interpretation of place, commonly referred to as *sense of place*. Yi-Fu Tuan in particular has spent much of his career focusing on geographies which arise from essential human characteristics and qualities (1974). His explorations of the sensuous nature of place are keys to understanding the geographic role of the individual. Studies of symbolism and schemata, such as the cultural meanings of color and direction, provide a basis for understanding cultural continuity derived from sensuousness, and a possible prototype for examination of social structures. And while Tuan might not have applied the title of “relational geographer” to himself, his neologism “topophilia” sheds some light on the relational ontology of *place* creation:

“[Topophilia] may be tactile, a delight in the feel of the air, water, earth. More permanent and less easy to express are feelings that one has toward a place because it is home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood” (1974, 93).

It follows, then, that an absence of topophilic satisfaction could help explain a sense of what geographer Relph called *placelessness*<sup>7</sup>. Canadian geographer Edward Relph decried what he saw as an encroaching “placelessness” driven by capitalism and globalization. Despite using inflammatory words like “authenticity” to bolster his arguments about place, Relph’s message still resonates. If an individual’s agency in fulfilling these most basic needs is removed, then the ability to connect with place may be compromised, thus shifting place toward *non-place*: a space with which there is no, or little, personal connection for the individual. Can the imposition of a distant agency over space result in a more general sense of placelessness, impacting place on more than just an individual basis?

Studies such as one conducted by Ortiz, Garcia-Ramon, and Prats (2004) in Raval, Barcelona, supply evidence of a place where inhabitants struggle with possible transformation toward placelessness following urban “improvements”—changes that drastically altered the character of public space in the neighborhood and made it difficult for some to connect with the space. The reader is introduced to several groups who use the space on the Rambla del Raval (a 300-meter-long boulevard designed for large public gatherings) for various, and sometimes competing, daily purposes. Long-time residents and immigrants alike are dealing with forces beyond the scope of personal agency—there is something more going on that is working against individualized place-building. It is at this point that the notion of social *structure* becomes useful. According to Allan Pred:

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<sup>7</sup> Also see Appendix F.

Social structure is comprised of those generative rules and power relations—including the control over material, symbolic or authoritative resources—that are already built into a specific historical and human geographical situation, or into an historically and geographically specific social system (1984, 281).

In *Structuration and Place* (1983) Pred analyzes the humanist geographers' struggle with structure when writing on sense of place:

Although [they] sometimes make reference to society, to intersubjective communication and consensus of meaning, to social position, and to social conditioning, those terms are only employed as mere backdrops to individual experience... the nebulous societies they fleetingly refer to are somehow devoid of both specific rule-providing, activity-organizing institutions and structural relations among collectivities, individuals, and institutions (50).

Anthony Giddens' structuration theory and Pred's subsequent integration of it with Hagerstrand's time-geography (Pred 1984), were attempts to reconcile the apparent conflict of agency arising between "structure" on the one hand, and "individual" on the other. These attempts, however, have fallen short of accounting for the durability of social structure in the absence of direct human interactions. Quoting Craib, Murdoch (1997b) explains that:

`Giddens gives very little prominence to the physical world; he recognizes [sic] that it has a constraining effect . . . but beyond that he is wary of it'. The physical world seems somewhat removed, therefore, from structure; it exists only `at the edges of society, not as something which enters into the centre [sic] of our being' (1997b, 324).

Murdoch goes on to say that "this neglect of materiality is important because it contributes to a weak conceptualization of structure in structuration theory: by collapsing structure into action (through the process of `instantiation') nothing recognizably `structural' remains. Thus, structuration theory becomes essentially a voluntaristic theory of action" (1997b, 324). He goes on:

This voluntarism emerges as problematic when dealing with systems, institutions or societies. These phenomena are predicted on the existence of actions which have in some way endured through space and time, that is, action/structure exists

in some sense 'beyond' or 'outside' the interactions in which it is instantiated. Yet it is unclear in structuration theory how this occurs for the theory only permits stabilized action/structure a 'virtual' existence. Again, the problem here is partly related to the neglect of physicality: as Craib (1992: 160) reminds us 'social relationships are mediated not just by members' interaction but by the relationship of all the members to the physical world'. This is because 'the physical world takes on some aspects of human action - it does things to people - whilst human action takes on some of the 'weight' of the physical world' (1992: 160). Thus he concludes that some notion of an external structure - something physically distinct from human actors - needs reinstating if we are to account for large-scale phenomena'" (1997b, 324)

Doreen Massey's research has also engaged this prescribed duality of structure and individual, providing a great deal of insight into the permanently messy and asymmetrical reality of globalization. In examining concepts of "aspatial globalization" and "geometries of power," two powerful contributors to modern spatial theory, Massey observes that:

[W]e have two apparently self-evident truths, a geography of borderlessness and mobility, and a geography of border discipline; two completely antinomic geographical imaginations of global space, which are called upon in turn. No matter that they contradict each other; because it works. And it 'works' for a whole set of reasons (2005, 86).

Massey again:

Global space...is a product of *material practices of power* [emphasis added]. What is at issue is not just openness and closure or the 'length' of the connections through which we, or finance capital, or whatever...go about our business. What are at issue are [sic] the constantly-being-produced new geometries of power, the shifting geographies of power-relations (2005, 85).

She offers "differentiated mobility" (1994, 149) as a spatial manifestation of power geometries.

In Massey's estimation, there are those who simultaneously exercise mobility and are in control of it (the elite); those who are mobile, but do not control their mobility (many immigrants and refugees); and those who benefit from the control and mobility that others exercise, without being very mobile themselves (mass consumers of global culture). What Massey describes

appears as an increasingly dynamic and fluid social matrix that may be beyond the ability of *a priori* notions of structure and agency to analyze. Her interpretation also helps to examine the perceived dissolution of pre-existing places, as well as the expanding sense of placelessness around the world.

Problematically, geographic discussions often use dualistic language that may contribute to essentializing space and place. Cresswell, for example, defines place as “how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the context of power” (2006, 12). This definition of “space invested with meaning” presupposes a thing (space) into which meaning (a human construct) can then be invested. Critical scholars such as Deloria (1969) and Plumwood (2002) have asserted that modern science retains an assumption that the vast majority of the world is somehow inert and compliant. These authors contend that this presupposition not only limits our ability to consider non-human agency, but it is also the basis for cultural oppression of indigenous people and women. While human agency in the place-making process is often undeniable, geographic definitions of space and place should be constructed in order to open these concepts to more agencies rather than fewer.

The definition of “place as becoming locale” (Gregory et al. 2009, 494) is useful:

... place is not derived from something else (as place from space); it is, rather, an always-already ongoing assemblage<sup>[8]</sup> of geographically associated, ontologically co-constitutive elements and relationships. (Space, one might say, is fully saturated with place.) This idea of place builds upon structuration theory (e.g., Pred, 1984) and, later, on representational theory and on the monistic thought of Gilles Deleuze and other theorists of immanence (p. 540).

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<sup>8</sup> *Assemblage* is a concept explored by Deleuze and Guattari, and refers to the assembly of diverse things and people into an identifiable social structure.

If Tuan (1974) is correct, then humans need a certain amount and quality of spatial continuity to form a sense of place; unfortunately, many of us can no longer count on that stability. The Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden (ITGG) begins to address the issue of *placelessness* by acknowledging the necessary agential diversity implicit in place-making. The ITGG project brings together historical documents, the physical landscape, people residing both in and outside of Cully, governmental agencies, and even includes industrial waste in the recognition of place. This diverse assemblage, instead of attempting to erase history in creating a “new” park space, is purposely reaching across space *and time* to acknowledge the ongoing place-making that has been happening since before Euro-American colonization. In so doing, the ITGG may help to restore a deeper spatial continuity, and thus a sense of place, to the neighborhood.

#### Material-semiotics and Actor-network Theory

If *sense of place* is about identifying our participation in “an always-already ongoing assemblage,” then *material-semiotics* is a theoretical framework which enables scientists to acknowledge the shared agency implicit in the act of place-making.

Cultural geographers such as Bruce Braun, Noel Castree, and Doreen Massey have all commented on the problematic dualisms within geography (Castree 2002; Braun 2004; Massey 1999) (also see Appendix F). The institutional dichotomy separating “human” and “physical” continues to defy reconciliation, making crossover studies difficult at best (see Braun 2004, 152). Braun and Castree, as well as planner Jonathan Murdoch, have made strong arguments for adopting a post-structural framework as a non-dualistic, relational tool to assist in sidestepping many of geography’s current contradictions (Braun 2004; Castree and MacMillan 2001; Murdoch 1997a, 1997b, 2005).

One of the most well-established frameworks for bypassing institutional contradictions is

actor-network theory (ANT). ANT was developed in the early 1980s by French researchers in the Science-Systems field (Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, and John Law) who were looking for the ways in which laboratory scientists co-construct society's experience of the world through their experiments and subsequent textual inscriptions. According to Fernando Bosco:

ANT is about uncovering and tracing the many connections and relations among a variety of actors (human, non-human, material, discursive) that allow particular actors, events and processes to become what they are (Aitken and Valentine 2006, 136).

Discussing the usefulness of ANT, Bruno Latour describes the conditions that make it desirable compared to more established methodologies:

[I]n situations where innovations proliferate, where group boundaries are uncertain, when the range of entities to be taken into account fluctuates, the sociology of the social [his designation for old-school structural sociology, as opposed [to] ANT, which he terms 'sociology of association'] is no longer able to trace actors' new associations. At this point, the last thing to do would be to limit in advance the shape, size, heterogeneity, and combination of associations (Latour 2007, 11).

Latour goes on to describe the change necessary in dealing with this dynamic research environment:

[I]t is no longer enough to limit actors to the role of informers offering cases of some well-known types. You have to grant them back the ability to make up their own theories of what the social is made of. Your task is no longer to impose some order, to limit the range of acceptable entities, to teach actors what they are, or to add some reflexivity to their blind practice...you have 'to follow the actors themselves'...in order to learn from them what the collective existence has become in their hands, which methods they have elaborated to make it fit together, which accounts could best define the new associations that they have been forced to establish (2007, 12).

Within the analytical framework of ANT and other post-structuralist material-semiotic tools, actors and agency are identified by following social *controversies*. Venturini explains that "in controversies, actors are unremittingly engaged in tying and untying relations, arguing categories and identities, revealing the fabric of collective existence"(Venturini 2012, 2).



Another way of saying this is that a material-semiotic view of these controversies contradicts the idea that objects have essential and static qualities, and instead insists that knowledge of the world is only possible through a process of mapping ongoing interrelations. Furthermore, the very act of interacting results in what Callon (1986) refers to as *translation*. The process of translation means that humans, animals, God(s), landscape, technical tools, ideas, or anything involved in a relationship, trades properties with all the others to some degree, participating in an ongoing process of mutual co-creation. Critics of this anti-essentialist perspective have argued that it in effect robs humans and other sentient beings of theoretical agency and self-determination, leaving humans no more willful than a door closer (Whittle and Spicer 2008). While researchers of the social are well advised to be wary of promoting the kind of disempowerment these critics warn of, Callon and others insist that the intent of material-semiotics is quite the opposite: in order to understand complex social entanglements, researchers must be willing to accept the potential agency of things *other than the sentient*. A seminal study of the relationship between scientists, fishermen, and scallops in St. Brieuc Bay (Callon 1986) details the sudden and unexpected transitions in perceived agency among the various actors, as well as documenting the ways that each participant alters the others during the process of translation. This, according to Murdoch (2005), “provides a clear illustration of action arising from the combined relations of humans and non-humans when [Callon] examines the application of scientific knowledge to scallop fishing in northern France” (67). Murdoch goes on summarize the research:

Callon tells how a group of scientists attempt to persuade a group of French fishermen of the utility of their scientific knowledge by specifying a set of guidelines which will increase scallop numbers. Callon shows how the scientists attempt to build a scientific network by getting other actors to comply with them.as the scientists link the entities together, so they designate a set of

interrelated roles. Importantly, the entities include non-humans, and Callon shows how the scientists enrol [*sic*] both scallops and fishermen into their network. However, he also goes on to show that for the network to be successfully stabilized, the designated roles have to be accepted by all the actors. In this case, the fishermen and the scallops reject their allocated functions and effectively go their own way, thereby breaking apart the network, as well as showing how processes of network construction can fall apart, this outcome indicates that non-humans can be just as effective in initiating action as humans (2005, 67).

This study, along with many others informed by material-semiotic frameworks, serves to demonstrate that agency is a result of constantly fluctuating relationships rather than some force contained within sentient vessels expressed as a function of intentionality.

Space and place can be examined through the same lens of material-semiotics. While most of the time *places* flow invisibly as lived experience, or present themselves as somehow essential, controversy allows for a kind of stasis effect, exploding the flow into punctuated, bounded timeframes and spaces visibly filled with networks of actors struggling to determine the next stable configuration. Controversies serve to highlight the ways in which a *place* is performed and stabilized, showcasing the variety of actors and agencies, whether human, “natural,” or otherwise.

The creation of the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden (ITGG) provides an exemplary heterotopic socio-natural controversy. Far from being a foregone conclusion, the ITGG showcases the ongoing negotiations that will precede its success or failure as a stable place. So many things can go wrong: human participants may lose interest or act as vandals; indigenous plant seeds can refuse to take root; the City of Portland might change relevant ordinances in such a way as to undermine the project; global climate change could result in the regular weather patterns in the area becoming inhospitable to the ITGG’s ecology; or the eco-cultural foundation of the ITGG’s design intent may turn out to be missing intended historical components. Though

this process of negotiation will never stop, some aspects may eventually stabilize, multiplying the chances for other negotiations to follow suit. Every actor that is successfully enrolled into the ITGG project through the process of translation becomes a part of the place, simultaneously becoming a new actor even as the ITGG becomes a new place. Every sign that is erected and design plan that is drawn-up (see Appendix D), every city council member who is convinced of the ITGG's efficacy (or not), and every plant that is grown and harvested becomes a stabilizing influence in the ITGG's continued existence. Material-semiotics can be a lens that helps "modern" science to refocus on, and account for, many more place-making agents acting in places like the ITGG (see Appendix E. for a map of some of the ITGG partner organizations).

### Heterotopia

While *utopia* and *dystopia*<sup>9</sup> exist primarily as representational space, examples of which may be impossible to find in our daily lives, Soja refers to heterotopia as "lived space" (1996, 10), an unavoidable mixing of the two other dichotomized spaces--the "real" and the "imagined"--that make up our lives. The term *heterotopia* was used by Foucault to describe "counter-sites" or:

...real places... of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality (1986, 24).

Hetherington (1997) and Law (2011) have also explored the notion of heterotopia, identifying a common set of traits to be gleaned from these authors' research. Heterotopic space may be said to be: relational, heterogeneous<sup>10</sup>, local, experienced, challenging to the status quo social

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<sup>9</sup> These terms should be understood as "not-place" and "bad-place" respectively.

<sup>10</sup> *Heterogeneous* refers to material-semiotics' insistence that what we call the "social" is always made up of "patterned networks" of disparate materials (even if those materials are not strictly physically tangible) (Law 1992, 381).

arrangement, and always in a process of becoming. While Hetherington identifies place as “an ordering effect of those agents” within “arrangements or networks of heterogeneous materials” (1997, 185), he goes on to elaborate on the specifics of heterotopic space as exhibiting:

...similitude—a juxtaposition ...of things not usually found together, or which have no ordered meaning together and the ambiguity that they create in terms of representation. Similitude sets up a heterotopic space (Hetherington 1997, 186).

In other words, heterotopia is a space that defies previously conceived social orderings. Whereas *utopia* and *dystopia* represent ideas of perfect success or perfect failure, neither of which can ultimately exist in “lived” space, heterotopia can be seen as space that represents material-semiotic controversies in the construction of place.

Barnes (2004) also discusses heterotopic spaces, describing them as “potent places of intellectual change” (2004, 574). He goes on:

They are places where the old order of things is ‘shattered’, its ‘syntax destroyed’, where words and things no longer ‘hold together’, and which is consequently replaced by a new order. That is, heterotopias are places of ‘paradigm’ change, sites of new ‘styles of scientific reasoning.’ (2004, 574)

Barnes’ paper is in this case describing the sites and places involved in the emergence of quantitative geography, and its subsequent domination of the discipline. Barnes refers to Isaac Newton’s “elaboratory,” the Palais Royale in Paris, and “the Citadel at Smith Hall, University of Washington” (the center of geography’s “quantitative revolution”) as examples of heterotopic spaces of change (2004, 576). The same paradigm-challenging power is evident in the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden (ITGG). The ITGG’s design challenges park visitors to question

preconceived ideas of what a park space “should” be<sup>11</sup>, juxtaposing the more “normal” uses of recreation or small-plot community gardening with a focused eco-cultural reclamation mandate.

### Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), as defined by Cajete, refers to a “...science [which] acts to mediate between the human community and the larger natural community upon which humans depend for life and meaning. This intimate and creative participation...heightens awareness of the subtle qualities of place” (Johnson and Murton 2007, 126). One of the most challenging and important concepts in TEK is that of *kincentricity*. As identified by Senos (2006), kincentricity is “...a view of human and nature as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origin” (2006, 397). This perspective contrasts sharply with much of “Western” science’s view that humans and “Nature” are ontologically distinct realms, and that the “objective” researcher must always strive to maintain disconnected from “subject” which is studied.

Inherent in many TEK frameworks is the concept of kincentricity. Kincentricity is defined by Rene Senos et al. as “...a view of human and nature as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origin” (2006, 397). This perspective contrasts sharply with much of “Western” science’s view that humans and “Nature” are ontologically distinct realms, and that the “objective” researcher must always strive to remain disconnected from the “subject” that is studied. Though there are many broad similarities among indigenous groups, there is no universal “Native” knowledge system, and the locality of individual systems is considered a strength. One way in which all are similar, however, is in the ubiquitous erasure of TEK under

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<sup>11</sup> See Gobster (2007) for an excellent review and critique of urban park design.

the influence of modern science. In order for eco-cultural reclamation and place-creation at the ITGG to proceed as intended, there are actors that must be invited into the process, actors that cannot exist in a world constructed under the scaffold of modernity. Spirits cannot act if they are no more than “beliefs” or metaphors. People cannot enter into a contract with the land, a contract that N. Scott Momaday describes as one of “reciprocal appropriation” (1986, 80), if that land is inert and without agency.

Another important pillar of TEK is the concept of *cultural keystone species*. According to Boyd et al., cultural keystone species are “resources that play a key role by materially supporting cultures and becoming intertwined with cultural traditions and narrative... Criteria to identify a cultural keystone species most relevant to the lower Columbia [include]: intensity and multiplicity of use; linguistic indicators such as specialized terminology and/or names, that is, months or seasons or places; role in narratives, ceremonies, or symbolism; unique position or irreplaceability in culture; and role as a trade items” (2013, 65). Garibaldi and Turner (2004) explain at length:

Just as certain species of plants or animals appear to exhibit a particularly large influence on the ecosystem they inhabit, the same is true in social systems. We have termed these organisms “cultural keystone species” and define them as the culturally salient species that shape in a major way the cultural identity of a people, as reflected in the fundamental roles these species have in diet, materials, medicine, and/or spiritual practices. Recently, others have denoted culturally significant species as “keystone,” such as the sago palm *Metroxylon sagu* (R. Ellen, unpublished manuscript) in eastern Indonesia and mesquite (*Prosopis* spp.) in the American Southwest (Nabhan and Carr 1994; G. Nabhan, L. Monti, and L. Classen, unpublished manuscript). These designations underscore the value of further developing a concept of cultural keystone species that articulates some of the defining characteristics of these organisms.

Keystone species may serve a particular culture materially in a host of different ways: as a staple food or a crucial emergency food, in technology, or as an important medicine. As well, such a cultural keystone species may be featured in narratives or have important ceremonial or spiritual roles. It would also likely

be highly represented in a culture's language and vocabulary... [A]lthough the specific role a particular species plays in a culture may vary considerably, its designation as a cultural keystone species lies in its high cultural significance. (2004, Cultural Keystone Species, para. 1 and 2)

It should be noted that this recognition that these species “shape in a major way the cultural identity of a people” should not be taken as a return to environmental determinism. TEK research emphasizes the reciprocal and co-productive relationship between indigenous peoples and the land. Case studies focusing on a variety of ecosystem types (e.g., prairies on the Olympic Peninsula (Wray and Anderson 2003) and desert spring habitat in Organ Pipe National Monument (Nabhan 2003)) show how current, as well as historic, TEK land management practices increase local biodiversity, and do so precisely because of a heterotopic relationship to place<sup>12</sup>.

Research into TEK has provided an important possibility for growth within Western scientific communities. Berkes' definition of TEK as any paradigm that is “...both cumulative and dynamic, building on experience and adapting to changes” (Senos et al. 2006, 394), offers an opportunity to re-envision and modify current geographic research on place and place-making. To help expand this vital research, Davidson-Hunt and O'Flaherty (2007) have developed a useful methodological framework for enabling scientists to engage in cross-cultural, place-based learning with indigenous communities, stressing that “[t]here can be no simple...methodological ‘fix’—only the work required to build long-term relationships of trust and commitment to community-based initiatives” (302).

In addition, Watson's work alongside members of the Koyukon Athabascan community in Alaska, informed by posthumanist and material-semiotic theory, has resulted not only in an

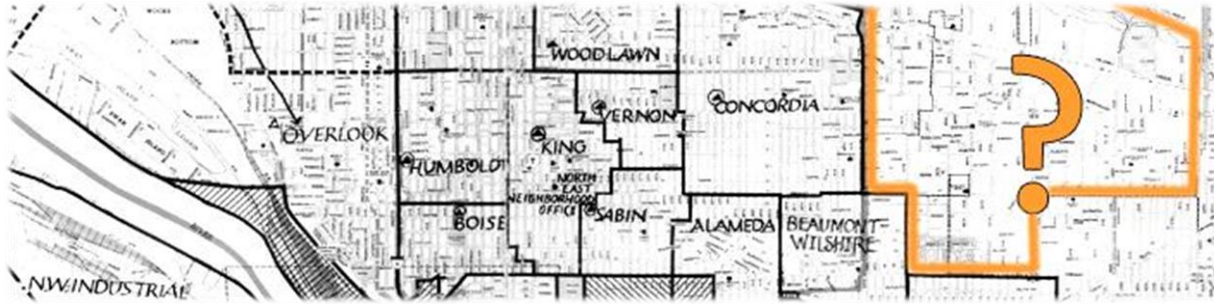
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<sup>12</sup> See previous section, page 18.

excellent contribution to place-based TEK research, but her work also clearly shows the vital similarities between the paradigms of TEK and material-semiotics, and their usefulness for geography and resource management (Watson and Huntington 2008). As Watson elaborates, “I am arguing to expand our ideas about what counts as knowledge, and what makes one a human. Wildlife co-management might begin to address research questions that are founded upon different or re-envisioned assumptions of nature and society” (2013, 1099).

The research discussed above provides useful ideas for geographers grappling with place-based contemporary issues. Urban land-use, indigenous rights, and biodiversity are all within the purview of geographic study--these areas would also benefit from adding both a material-semiotic and a TEK lens to the geographic toolbox, allowing the range of actors involved in the place-making process to be better represented. The indigenous eco-cultural paradigm guiding the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden (ITGG) is very different from the euro-science paradigm behind most urban park planning. In order for the ITGG project to thrive, these two perspectives will have to constructively engage each other, ultimately transforming together into a completely new paradigm.





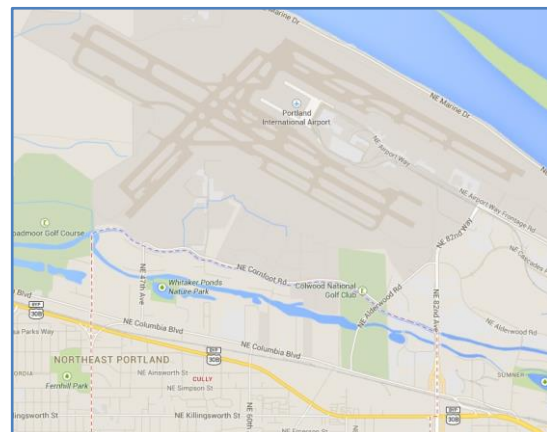
Some of the boundaries Adopted by Neighborhood Associations in 1981, with Cully notably absent (ONA 1981).

### In the Neighborhood of Cully

*My exposure to the Cully neighborhood landscape and people has been peripheral. Literally, most of my extended interaction with the area has been channeled around the neighborhood's boundary. A mapping project with the Columbia Slough Watershed Council initially brought me to Whitaker Ponds Nature Park, situated in the northwestern corner, along the slough. During that time, I made Delphina's Bakery Café, located along 42nd Street—Cully's western border—a regular haunt, both before and after venturing into the field. Later, I would spend time in Cully's northeastern corner mapping parts of the Colwood Golf Course for future rehabilitation and conversion to public land. During the two years I worked in the area, however, the neighborhood's interior remained unexplored. Gathering on the muddy grass field of the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden felt like my first real step inside Cully.*

### Cully and the Columbia Slough

Cully sits just south of the meandering, raggedy natural boundary of the Columbia Slough and the rigid geometry of Portland International Airport. Here, modern maps often represent a charming dichotomy: that is, the airport is visualized as an abstract crisscross of geometric lines, while the slough is reduced to a broken strand of blue pearls strung out below (Google



**Figure 5 Typical Representations of the Columbia Slough and Portland International Airport. Map from Google (2014)**

2014) (Figure 5). The pearls are a clean, bright blue and the runways are a clean grey-- both are neatly and precisely bounded within the surrounding wetlands. This physical landscape of much of North Portland was established during the last Ice Age, when walls of icy water and debris repeatedly exploded out of Glacial Lake Missoula over a period of thousands of years.

According to the *Columbia Slough Stream Flow and Hydrology Characterization* report, these violent floods covered the lower Columbia River floodplains with “gravels and fine sediments... and formed the topography of, among other features, the Alameda Ridge that gently slopes north to the Columbia Slough” (Brooks 2003, 5–1) (see Figure 2a above). The report goes on to explain that:

The end of glaciation, approximately 10,000 years ago, resulted in a rise in sea level and also the development of a more gentle and broad floodplain surrounding the Columbia River, in which side channels were formed and abandoned by the changing river, and within this environment the present-day Columbia Slough formed (Brooks 2003, 5–1).

When encountered up close, the slough is less blue—more of a mucky green—and somewhat less precise than its mapped version, but still charming (Figure 6). Wetland creatures like nutria and migratory waterfowl proliferate, and scrubby trees and brambles present a pleasantly “natural” tableau, coexisting unexpectedly alongside loading docks or parking lots. The



**Figure 6. The Slow-moving Columbia Slough near Whitaker Ponds Nature Park**

fact that the Slough’s waterways are almost entirely channeled and compelled along their courses by Multnomah County Drainage District pump stations belies any cartographic suggestion of a definitively “natural” environment, as does the fact that many of the “green spaces” surrounding

the slough are actually golf courses and country clubs. The airport also exists well outside its strict map lines, with out-buildings and navigational beacons incongruously squatting in the midst of a marshy field, not to mention the effect that constant, low-flying air traffic has throughout the area. The land adjoining the slough is also Cully's industrial heart. For decades, the waterway served as a communal sewer for North Portland businesses, resulting in toxic levels of pollution in the slough's sediment. Advisories abound on signage or on websites such as that of the Columbia Slough Watershed Council, making it clear that:

Columbia Slough Fish may be hazardous to your health. Fish in the Columbia Slough contain PCBs and pesticides. These chemicals may effect [sic] human development, reproduction and immune systems. These chemicals may also increase your chance of getting cancer (State of the Slough n.d.).

### Pre-colonization Indigenous History

The Cully region of the Columbia Slough has a long and well-documented history of human settlement. Prior to colonization by the United States, Chinookan oral histories describe a different relationship to time than Euro-American historians, speaking in terms of “the Myth Age, the era of transformation, and the era of ‘relatively recent history’” (Boyd et al. 2013, 164). Euro-American archeologists place definitive human habitation along the Lower Columbia River at sometime between 7,300 and 6,000 BC, though estimates based on general North American archeological records indicate the possibility of a time as far back as 11,200 BC (Boyd et al. 2013). Accounts from British and United States traders and explorers as early as 1792 describe indigenous communities situated along the nearby Columbia Slough (Boyd et al. 2013) (Figure 7). The Chinookan village of “Neerchokioo,” located on the site now occupied by Portland International Airport, was recorded by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark (1806) as they

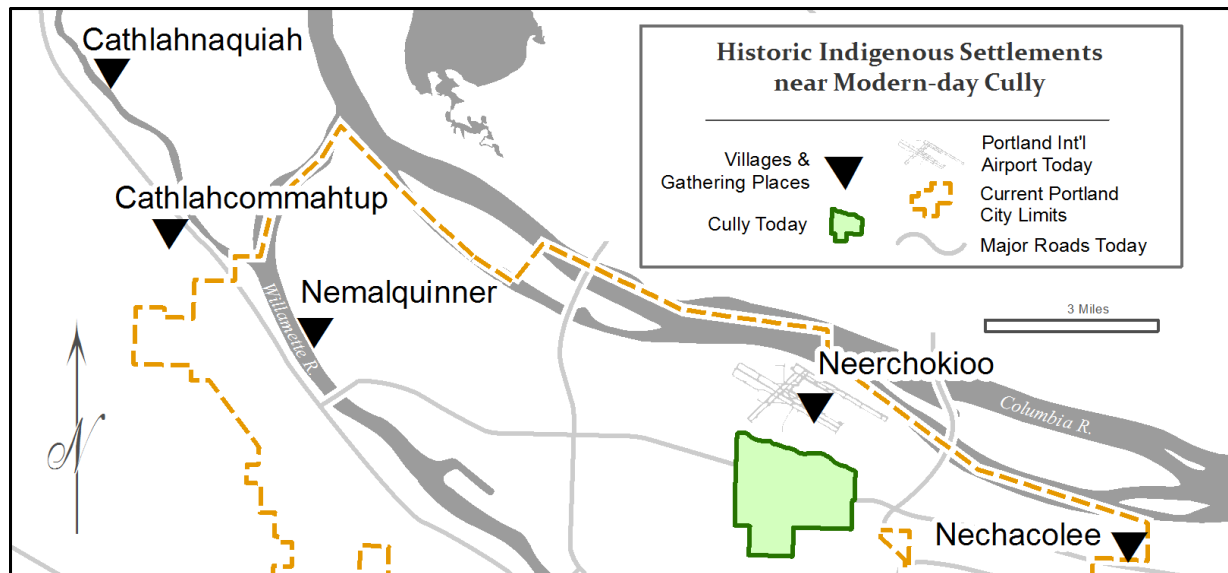


Figure 7. Indigenous Settlements near Cully. Adapted from (Boyd and Hajda 1987, 312)

traveled down the Columbia in 1805. According to the City of Portland:

Households were the fundamental units of their social and economic systems, in turn organized into semi-permanent villages characterized by large, multi-household plank houses and generally located adjacent to important bodies of water, such as the Columbia River. The main villages were complimented by seasonally-occupied camps located to take advantage of the life-cycles of salmon, game, Wappato root and other subsistence resources. Through inter-marriage and kinship bonds, Chinookan villages and bands were tied to each other and to neighboring Kalapuyans and more distant groups, such as the Klickitats to the east and the Tillamooks to the west. This combined with the importation of slaves from the coast and elsewhere, created multi-ethnic populations and villages that contradict early (and sometimes current) assumptions about rigid tribal boundaries and ethnic territoriality (City of Portland 2007, 3).

According to Boyd et al., “for the Chinookan peoples, access to a diversity of resources was a hallmark of well-being and wealth” (2013, 64). They go on to explain that “[i]n addition to the emphasis on resource diversity, there was a strong reliance on cultural keystone species [such as] salmon... cervids (elk and deer), seals, sea lions and sturgeon. Among plants, berries, wapato, camas and western red cedar qualify as keystone species” (2013, 65).

Approximately 50 years after Lewis and Clark's explorations of the Pacific Northwest, many of the estimated 3000 Native Americans living in villages along the Slough were either dead from disease or forcibly relocated to reservations (City of Portland 2007). To this day, Portland's Native American community represents one of the city's most impoverished groups (Curry-Stevens and Cross-Hemmer 2010) and a majority of the descendants of the original Chinookan residents remain unrecognized as members of an established tribe by the federal government (Boyd et al. 2013).

The devastation of the area's indigenous society by disease, dislocation, and death apparently left behind an emptiness that would never be completely filled by the settlers and institutions of the Oregon Territorial government or the United States. Despite being settled during the earliest part of Portland's history, Cully has yet to establish itself as an externally identifiable *place* in the way that other Portland neighborhoods have managed to do.<sup>13</sup>

In 1846, the area became associated with Thomas Cully's name when the English stonemason settled a 640-acre land claim<sup>14</sup> near the slough. The Cully family lands, along with other nearby properties, retained much of their rural character well into the Twentieth Century. While neighborhoods closer to downtown Portland were being reinvented in order to meet the demands of a rapidly expanding urban population, the Cully area remained largely "...Italian truck gardens and Swiss-German dairy [sic] farms. After World War II, single-family homes, some apartments and commercial uses were constructed. Industrial businesses were generally

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<sup>13</sup> See pages 29-30 for more discussion on this topic.

<sup>14</sup> In accordance with the Oregon Donation Land Claim Act, "[w]hen white Oregonians formed a provisional government in 1843, settlers in Oregon Country could claim a full section of land—640 acres" (Oregon Historical Society n.d.).

sited in the northern portion...along NW Columbia, Killingsworth and Portland Highway”  
(Weisser 1992, 8).

### Portland's Neighborhood System

After its annexation into the city in 1985, Cully became part of Portland's neighborhood system in 1987. The Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) “serves as a vital communication link between community members, neighborhoods, and City of Portland bureaus” (City of Portland 2014b). DeMorris and Leistner (2009) discuss the origins of ONI (Figure 8):

In 1974, the Portland City Council created Portland's formal system of neighborhood associations. Today the system includes ninety-five neighborhood associations, which cover nearly the entire territory of the city. The neighborhood associations are divided into seven coalition areas. Neighborhood district offices in each coalition offer technical assistance and community organizing support to

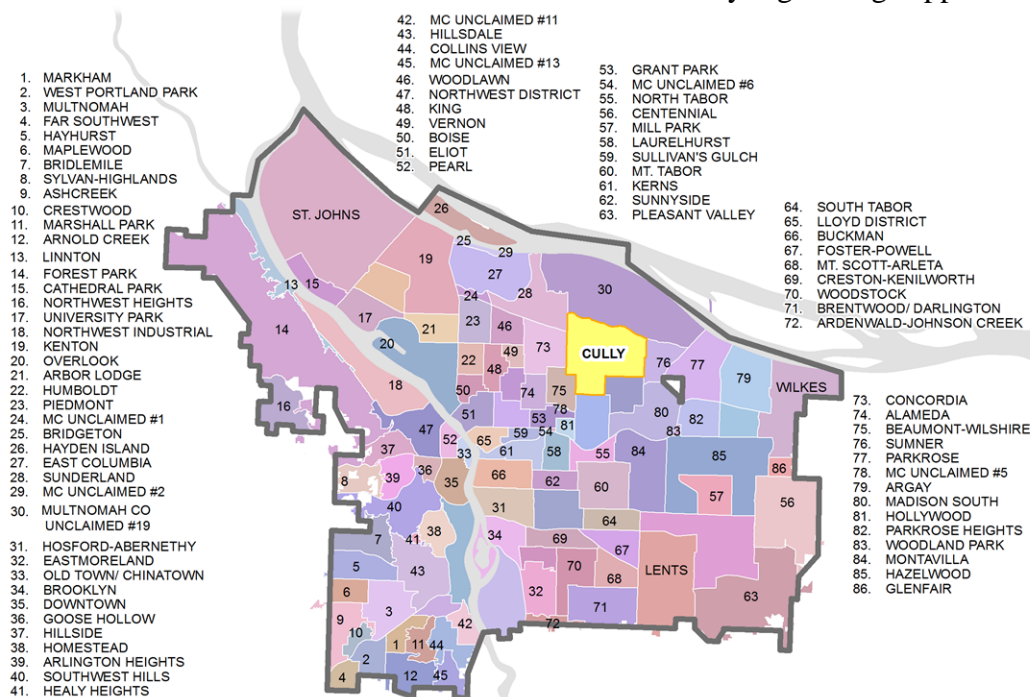


Figure 8. ONI Neighborhoods within Portland City Limits.

their neighborhoods. Five of the coalition offices are independent nonprofits run by boards of neighborhood association representatives, and two are run by city staff. (2009, 47) According to Carl Abbot, “Portland planning went through startling changes between 1966 and 1972, as the emergence of active and often angry neighborhood organizations made local residents the actors rather than the objects in neighborhood decisions”(1983, 190).

But, as DeMorris and Leistner explain, “Portland has changed since the neighborhood system was first created in 1975. The city, which historically has been very white, is growing increasingly diverse” (2009, 48–49). That diversity is especially evident in Cully.

As the city began to respond to citizen demands through the ONI, many of Portland’s neighborhoods benefitted from their early involvement, while Cully, having lacked official neighborhood status during the 1970s, remained largely outside the city’s concerns. Though the city has identified Cully’s problems at length in such documents as the 1992 *Cully Neighborhood Plan*, issues such as deterioration of residences and infrastructure, nighttime crime concerns, “‘undesirable’ businesses” (Weisser 1992, 11), and general lack of appropriate recreation and employment opportunities. Many of these problems continue to plague the area in 2014.

#### Post-colonization “Lack of Identity”

Today, the “placeness” of the modern Cully neighborhood resists outside interpretation. Portland’s *Cully Neighborhood Plan* echoes this sentiment in its “Neighborhood Identity” section, proclaiming “[t]his large, diverse neighborhood lacks identity” (Weisser 1992, 13). What vitality the neighborhood has seems to primarily emanate from the vicinity of the slough, energized by intense industrial-commercial activities, and a palpable tension between those wide-ranging networks of transport, capital, and energy, and the more primal networks made up of water, gravity, and wildlife. Cully’s residential interior, on the other hand, resists a ready

sense of place. Perhaps it is a by-product of so many unpaved streets<sup>15</sup>, but the rest of Cully seems to exert a sort of dusty refusal to any easy view from the outside. Only two percent of the neighborhood is zoned for commercial use (Bischoff 2013), and of the larger retail enterprises that do exist in Cully, most seem to be situated along the boundary streets, facing outward toward customers in the somewhat wealthier surrounding neighborhoods. Undoubtedly, automobile-owning residents are able take this situation in stride, driving to the various Wincos, Walmarts, and Whole Foods for their grocery needs. But as recent research found, a large portion of Cully's low-income population does not own a car, and is not within walking distance of a significant grocery outlet (Friedle 2011).

### Residential Cully

South of the triple asphalt, steel, and concrete lines of NE Columbia Avenue, the Union Pacific rail line, and NE Lombard Street, Cully begins to resemble a traditional residential neighborhood, but it is still tough to characterize. Many of the Portland neighborhoods located closer to downtown staked claims to one or another piece of the city's geographic identity. This may have been based on the particular groups that settled there, the visions of the developers, or simply by accident resulting from the city's early investments in their propinquity. Most Portlanders probably have some sense of place for the Laurelhurst neighborhood, with its swooping concentric streets, or the Pearl District's push to claim Portland's arts and culture crown by flooding storefronts with boutiques and galleries. Cully's late annexation into Portland in 1985, however, seems to have left it with an identity crisis that is only recently being addressed. Similar to many of the neighborhoods further to the east, Cully's layout is a relic of

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<sup>15</sup> Thirty-six percent of the neighborhood's streets are considered substandard, and many of them are still dirt roads (Bischoff 2013)



what Carl Abbot called “automobile suburb” planning , where new or refurbished residential areas were purposely located outside a three-mile ring around the inner, “everyday city” (1983, 4). This policy left a buffer of neighborhoods around downtown which were then largely abandoned by the city.

One of the most significant recent shifts in Cully’s makeup occurred between the 1990 and 2010 census reports (Hannah-Jones and Oregonian 2011) (Figure 9). During that time, “Cully [became] much more diverse than Portland as a whole. Communities of color comprise fifty-one percent of Cully’s population but only twenty-eight percent citywide. Among communities of color, Hispanic and Latino residents account for the largest share (twenty-six percent of all Cully residents), followed by black (seventeen percent) and Asian (six percent) residents” (DeFalco 2013a, 10).

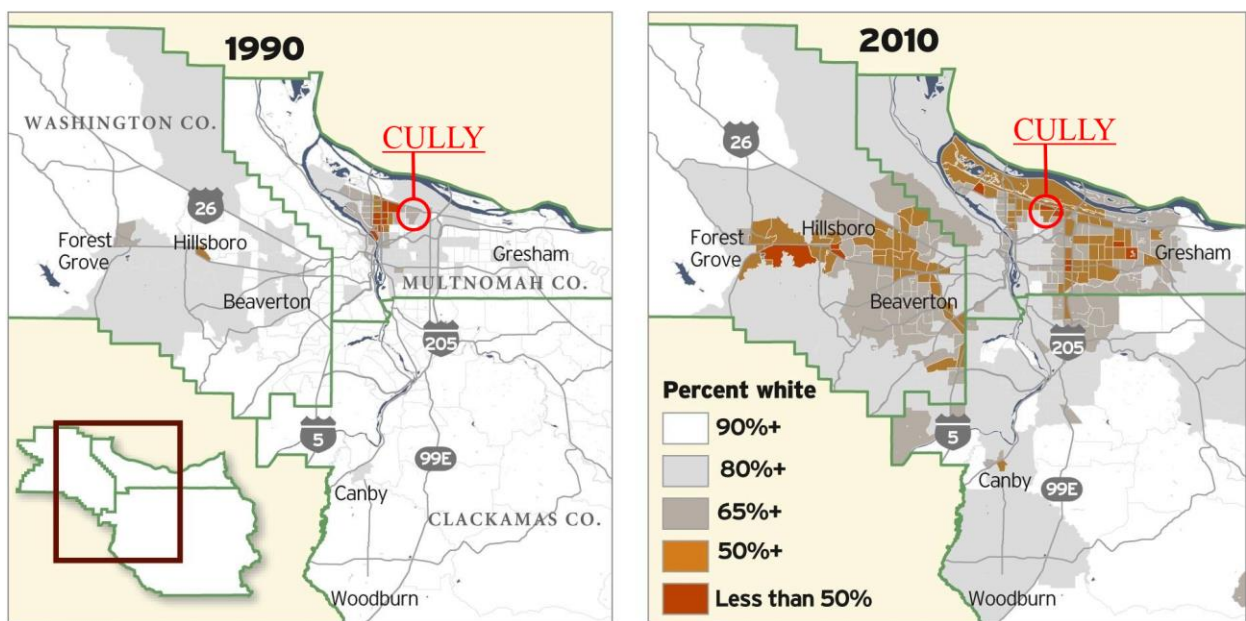


Figure 9 Portland's Non-White Diaspora between 1990 and 2010. Adapted from (Hannah-Jones 2011)

But while various city-sponsored community development plans have promoted growth and civic improvement (along with displacement) in other neighborhoods, Cully has so far been

left virtually untouched by development or gentrification. Looking at the interior residential areas, run-down craftsman homes with large lots built prior to 1970 are the norm. Unfortunately, many of the residential streets remain unpaved, with sidewalks an inconsistent feature at best. In a 2006 survey by Portland State University students, residents ranked “Lack of sidewalks” as a top neighborhood negative, coming in a close second just below “Drugs/criminal use/activity” (Dill and Recker 2006, 9). In addition to this general lack of infrastructure investment, patchy zoning practices often means that lovingly maintained front-yard flower gardens stand opposite welding shops or strip clubs across the street. There is also significant noise from nearby Portland International Airport. Finally, of the land officially within the neighborhood limits, only 7% is devoted to public open space (Bischoff 2013). Prior to the development of Cully Park, the two largest open spaces fairly near most residents were a graveyard (Rose City Cemetery), and what essentially amounts to a huge dog-run (Sacajawea Park). According to *The Oregonian*, Cully Park was intended to help remedy this situation:

The city did intend to start building Thomas Cully Park a decade ago when it paid \$1 million for a former sand mine and landfill at Northeast 72nd Avenue just north of Killingsworth Street...

The City Council held meetings and in 2008 signed off on a park master plan, which featured sports fields, walking trails and an estimated price tag of up to \$18 million. Then residents waited. (Parks 2014)

#### Cully Park and the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden

Today, Cully Park and the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden (ITGG) are part of the Living Cully project, an answer to the city’s 2009 Portland Ecodistrict Initiative. Because the initial focus of the ecodistrict concept was primarily on environmental sustainability, concerned representatives of several organizations in the Cully neighborhood got together to reconceive the ecodistrict concept, as explained in the *Living Cully Fact Sheet*, ”... as an anti-poverty strategy, a

means to address disparities in wealth, income, health and natural resources by concentrating environmental investments at the neighborhood scale, and a means to prevent displacement of low-income people and people of color” (DeFalco 2013b). Living Cully and Cully Park have become a community-up answer to Portland’s well-intentioned top-down initiative.

Though the site was purchased by the city ten years prior, work on Cully Park and the ITGG began in earnest only after a coalition of nonprofits took over the project. Work was spearheaded by community-oriented organizations like Verde, the Native American Youth and Family Center, the Portland Youth and Elders Council, the Columbia Slough Watershed Council, Hacienda Community Development Corporation, and Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives. The park’s design process since being taken-up by the non-profit coalition has embodied ideals of social, economic, and environmental equity and grassroots involvement. Examples of how this project is addressing neighborhood needs across various spectra include a kid-centric Play Area designed by neighborhood children, a Habitat Restoration Area utilizing a section of the park that is too steep for recreation to cultivate a mixed deciduous-riparian habitat, and the NE 72<sup>nd</sup> Ave Community Garden and Greenstreet improvements. Though Cully Park was primarily conceived of as recreational resource for the greenspace-starved neighborhood, it’s most important element may be the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden.



Looking east at Mt. Hood from the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden site, over the roofs of Cully's commercial-industrial sector.

### **(Re)building Networks, (Re)claiming Place**

*Judy Bluehorse-Skelton walks slowly around the circle twice. On her first pass she carries a bundle of smoldering herbs past each of us; on her second, she carefully scoops a small handful of native seed mixture to every circle member. Just a few minutes before, a Native American man sang a song to us and the land, and I was surprised to find myself crying. As Judy dumps the little spoon of seeds I pray the tears have cleared up so I won't look like too big a "wannabe".*

According to the *Let Us Build Cully Park!* Website, the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden's purpose is "...to provide the Portland Native community and Tribes whose ceded land includes the Cully Park site with a place to commune, cultivate indigenous foods and materials for cultural practices and traditions, and revitalize the associated knowledge, skills and ethics" (DeFalco n.d.). In order for this place to take shape, a diverse array of individuals and institutions had to be assembled. Usually the preamble to place-making stops there, with human agency playing out on a landscape stage, but the material-semiotic framework demands that a researcher go deeper. Law explains:

"...networks are composed not only of people, but also of machines, animals, texts, money, architectures--any material that you care to mention...the stuff of the social isn't simply human... Indeed, the argument is that we wouldn't have a society at all if it weren't for the heterogeneity of the networks of the social" (1992, 381).

For example, a review of historical documents is an important part of describing these networks,

as most of the durability in social assemblages occurs through the processes of “enrolment [sic]” and “translation” (Callon 1986, 6 – 12), often achieved through textual inscription. Various (and sometimes contradictory) *histories* are examples of the scientific translation of observed human and non-human phenomena into textual records, which are then available in a form that can be transported across great distances of both space and time.

Records like those in history books, web pages, or PowerPoint presentations, for example, become actors identifiable during the expansion and stabilization of actor-networks, and they leave a material trail of what Marxist theorists would describe as “social reproduction” (Pred 1981). The Lewis and Clark expedition notes that recorded the location of Neerchokikoo along the Columbia (Lewis and Clark 1806), as well as subsequent research citations, provide a “circulating reference” (Latour 1999) to “place” that can be drawn upon despite other erasures of Native connection to the Lower Columbia (Boyd and Hajda 1987)<sup>16</sup>.

One excellent reference for tracing the chains of controversy<sup>17</sup> inherent in stabilizing this new place is the *Let Us Build Cully Park! Tribal Gathering Garden* documentary video (Miller 2013). Assembled in the production are images, testimonials, descriptions of scientific and political processes, recognition of various actors, and several key statements tying the site’s visioning and construction into a generalized indigenous paradigm<sup>18</sup>. Indications of *heterotopia*, that blending of spaces that cannot be purified into dichotomies like social/natural or real/imaginary, are evident in the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden’s conception. Shawna Zierdt, of the Cowcreek Band of Umpqua Tribe and the Tribal Garden Community Liaison, expresses this

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<sup>16</sup> This may not be necessary from the perspective of tribe members whose community retains a strong cultural memory, but it should be seriously considered if indigenous groups are to effectively engage with scientific or governmental institutions that are founded in these material “burden-of-proof” paradigms.

<sup>17</sup> *Controversy* is not always a negative (see pages 16-17).

<sup>18</sup> This becomes especially important in showing how the project is deeply subversive to status quo land management founded on strict segregation between the “social” and the “natural.”

complex sense of place well:

There are multiple layers to the story that is here, and it spreads into the past and it spreads into the future, and it symbolizes hope ... [the Garden] allows us to transmit knowledge from our elders to our youth... it really starts to close a gap of tradition that has been lost. (Miller 2013)

Recognition of *sacredness* as a part of the ITGG's *placeness*, as well as the idea of *reclamation* instead of *restoration* is also a recurring theme:

There's historical trauma associated with the loss of place for Native people. [T]his piece of land...gives us an opportunity to acknowledge the history and sacred relationship that Native people have in place. (*Donita Sue Fry of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes*) (Miller 2013)

and,

[T]he opportunity here is more about reclaiming the relationships that have—maybe not been lost, but were interrupted, when ever so much of this wetlands and this area that we call Portland today was built up and industrialized... This is an opportunity for our community to come back to this place, this landfill, Cully Park site, and begin...healing, with not only the land but ourselves, as we create...or reclaim the relationship that we've always had with the land. (*Judy Bluehorse-Skelton of the Nez Perce/Cherokee Tribes*) (Miller 2013).

The expressions of sacredness and recognition of the land's agency, if taken as spoken and not categorized as somehow metaphorical, are heterotopic signposts: this place will not be a “normal” city park, nor will it be like any other community's garden in Portland. The incorporation of *traditional ecological knowledge*, whether locally situated or otherwise, expands the list of agencies to be enrolled in the ITGG place-making process. Not only can the place-making assemblage include such things as local community members, fences, city design documents, micro-climates, airborne weeds, sprinklers and rainwater, earthworms, transportation networks, and grass, but it may now include, among other things, plants designated as indigenous or cultural keystone species, historical documents identifying or supporting a

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particular indigenous or Native American pre-colonization social arrangement, and a “land” capable of its own expressions of agency in the arrangement.

### From Placelessness to Heterotopia?

*As I walk away from our circle, following the eclectic stream of native seeds dribbling from my palm, I force myself to embrace this small connection: however culturally discomfited I am, I now have a relationship with this place. After the last paper-like pod floats away on the chill air, I dust my hands off on my jeans, shove my frozen hands back into my gloves, and walk back down to the tent. Someone said stew, and hot tea...*

From a truly relational, process-based view of place, placelessness cannot exist; according to some theorists, the very existence of the universe is an expression of relational phenomena (Barad 2007; John Law 1992). But to a person whose opportunities for relationships have been curtailed, “like those of exiles or refugees, ... placelessness has become the essential feature of the modern condition” (Escobar 2001, 140), a phenomenological reality (Johnson and Murton 2007, 127). An anthropocentric paradigm of agency limits researchers’ range of potential analysis. Callon’s (1986) study of scallops, fishermen, and scientists<sup>19</sup> highlights what might have been lost if the author had assumed *a priori* that scallops are incapable of agency. In defying the will of scientists to organize various actors in a prescribed social arrangement, the scallop larvae, along with the fishermen, determined the scientists’ failure.

Moving beyond the limitations imposed by a human-only paradigm of agency is also imperative if conditions of placelessness are to be effectively addressed. “If human beings form a social network,” explains Law,” it is not because they interact with other human beings” (1992, 382). Rather, it is because:

...they interact with human beings and endless other materials too. And, just as human beings have their preferences--they prefer to interact in certain ways rather than in others--so too do the other materials that make up the heterogeneous networks of the social. Machines, architectures, clothes, texts--all contribute to the patterning of the social. And--this is my point--if these materials were to

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<sup>19</sup> See page 16 for details of Callon (1986).



disappear then so too would what we sometimes call the social order. (John Law 1992, 382)

In particular, indigenous groups who have been systematically cut-off from their traditional lands and subjected to the cultural erasure of Indian schools, rehousing, and reservation resettlement experience a severing or dilution of place-relationship that has been devastating. As evident in the above quote from Escobar, modernity itself seems to strive for placelessness. A common theme in both resource management and conservation is the draconian segregation of humans from areas designated for “use” or “preservation,” with human presence more-or-less restricted to designated land managers. Theorists of material-semiotics are working to deconstruct this notion of modernity. Latour, in his book entitled *We Have Never Been Modern* (Latour 1993), shows how the ontological paradigms which inform the “modern” or “developed” world are instrumental in constructing existential dichotomies such as Natural vs. Cultural, Human vs. Animal, Structure vs. Agency, and Social vs. Material. It can be argued that these arbitrary divisions serve to make any resulting place-based decisions suspect.

Escobar looks at the power of place in the face of one of the most powerful engines of placelessness, capitalism, stating that “...capitalism is at least to some degree transformed by places... What if we theorize capitalism not as something large and embracing but as something partial, as one constituent among many?” (2001, 157). Escobar goes on to say:

To speak about activating local places, cultures, natures, and knowledge against the imperializing tendencies of space, capitalism and modernity is not a *deus ex machine* [sic] operation, but a way to move beyond the chronic realism fostered by established modes of analysis. (2001, 164)

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If the so-called “modern” paradigm has indeed resulted in a sense of placelessness, with fewer opportunities for local agency in place-making relationships, then the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden may prove to be a valuable community-based counterweight.

### Final Thoughts

*I finally get a chance to chat with some people I know from other places (places reaching out to each other?) and my soul begins to relax from the combination of brisk cold, social awkwardness, and white-guilt. The conversations are almost as good as the stew. Judy Bluehorse-Skelton tells us that to sip tea together is a sacred connection as well as just a nice, warm drink. I get a glimmer of an answer my earlier question “Why?” but it’s only a glimmer. I’ll have to come back to this place again if I want to know more...*

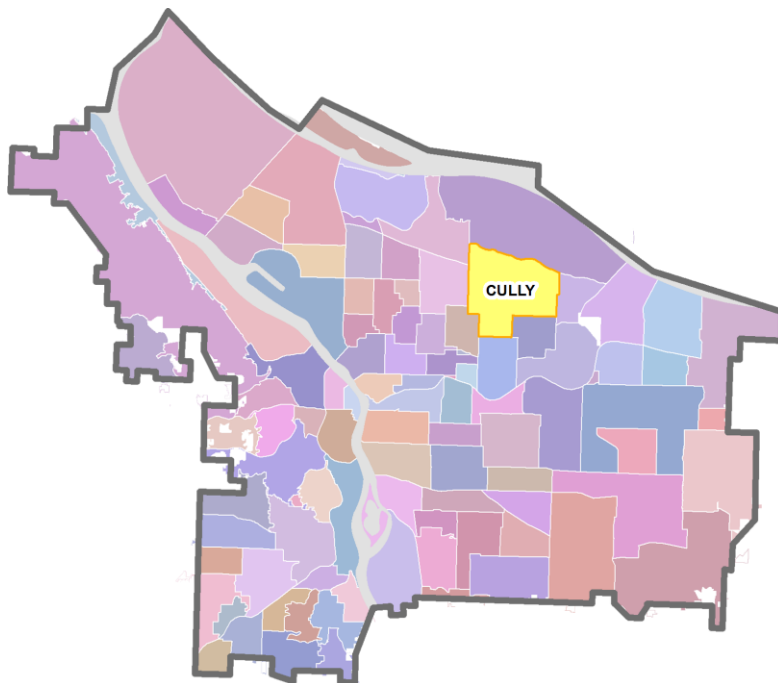
The Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden is a place that challenges a variety of “modernist” paradigms. Its intent challenges notions of appropriate park use by providing a “natural” area specifically designed to be used for cultural reclamation (i.e., gathering basket weaving materials, traditional foods, etc.). It has successfully engaged and enrolled a variety of regional governmental agencies such as Metro and Portland Parks and Recreation in its network, thus potentially transforming (“translating”)<sup>20</sup> those organizations and making it more likely that similar projects will be approved in the future. The park and garden are located in a densely populated urban neighborhood, so there are prolific opportunities for expanding relations into the future.

Finally, in co-constructing a place which has been, for a long time, placeless (for Cully neighborhood in the short-term and the Native American community in the long) the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden is acting as a beachhead, a catalyst for healing a wounded sacredness of Portland.

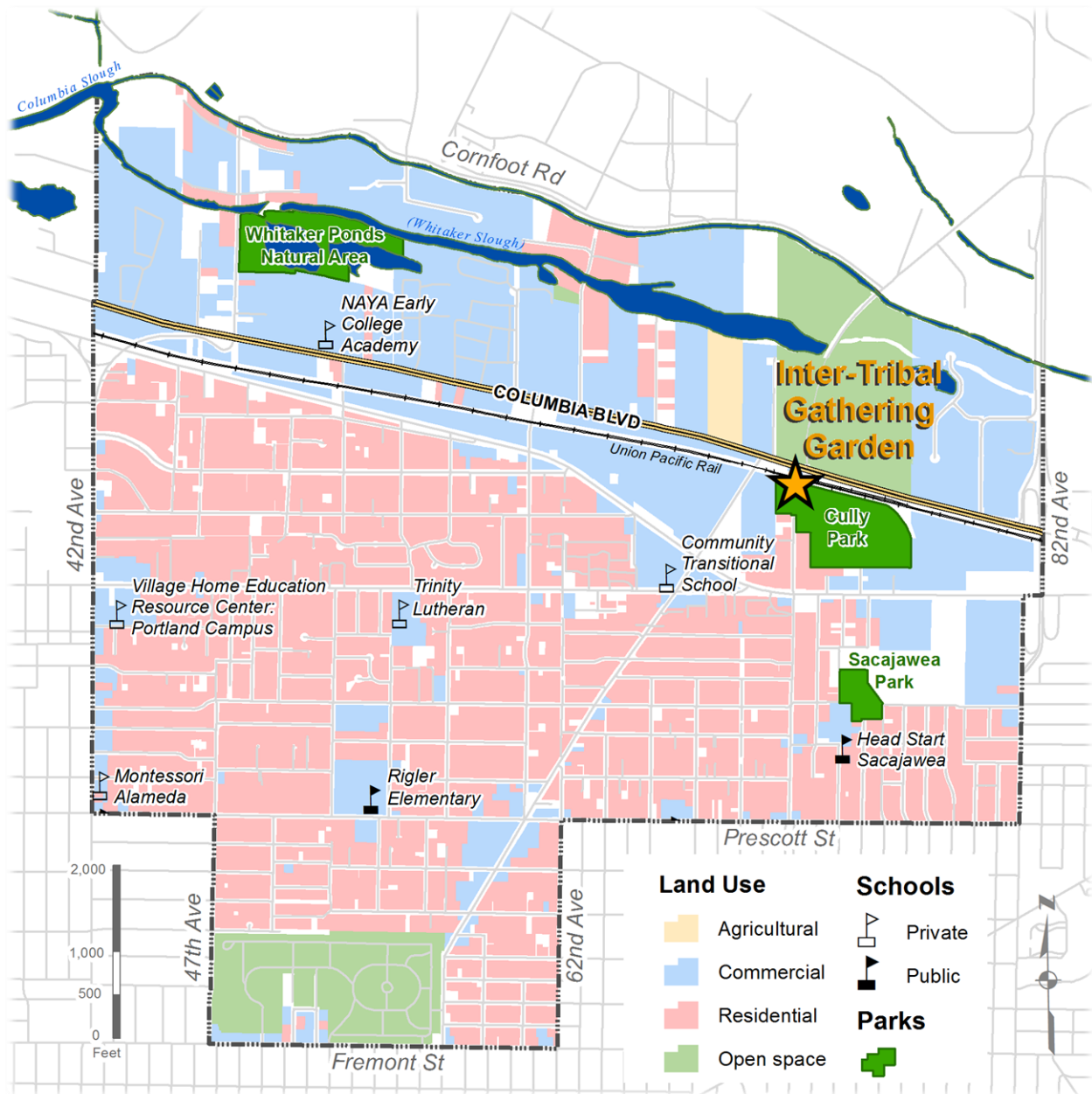
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<sup>20</sup> See page 16 for discussion of the concept of *translation*.

Appendix A. Aerial photo map and neighborhood associations map, both of the Cully Neighborhood within Portland city boundary. (Data from ESRI 2014).



Appendix B. Map of Cully and Location of the Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden (ITGG). (Data from Metro 2014).



Appendix C. An overview of the Cully Park site. Arrow indicates location of ITGG. (ESRI 2014)





Appendix D. The Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden sign and design concept art (DeFalco 2014).

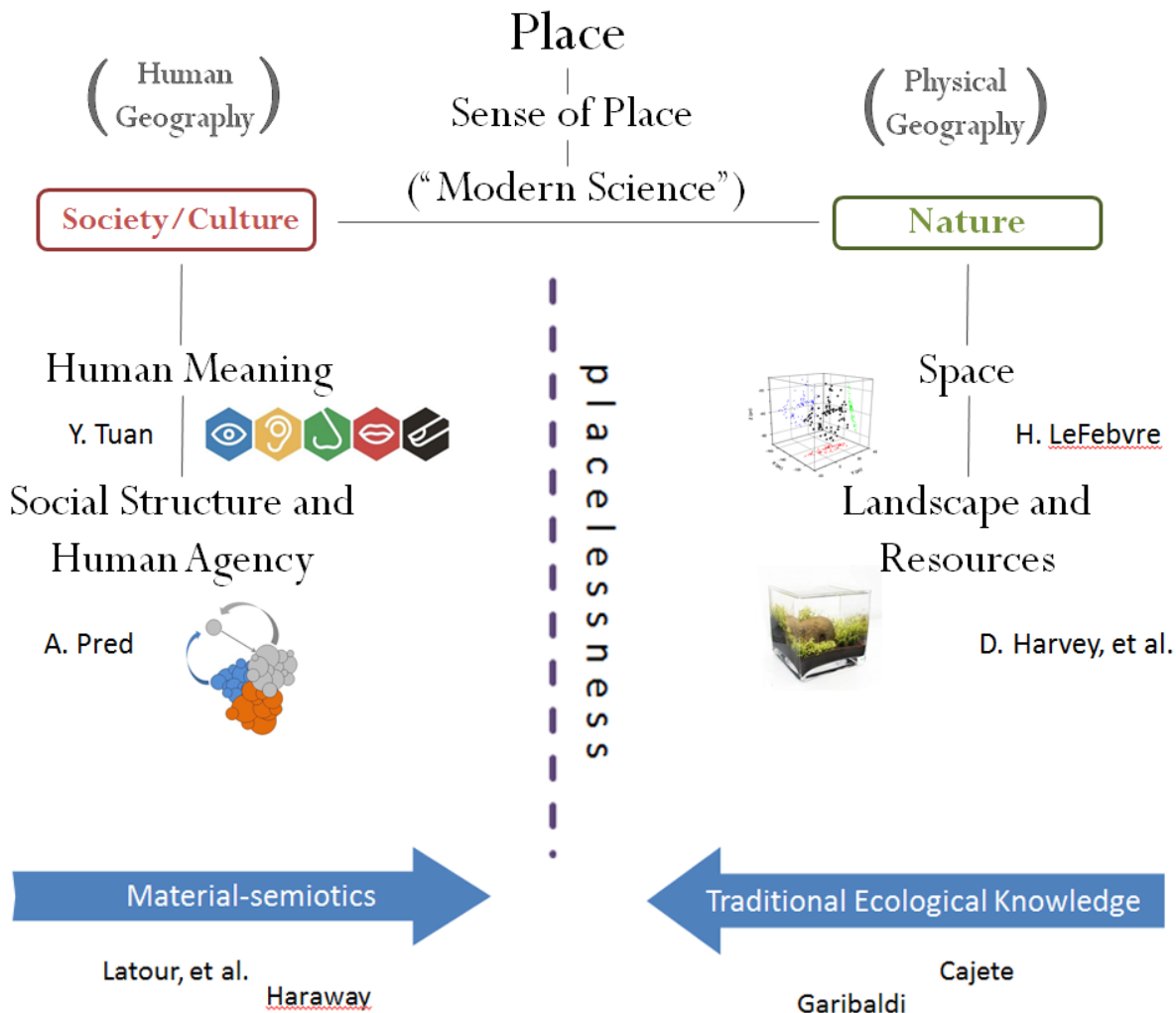


Appendix E. Some of the Inter-Tribal Gathering partner organizations and their spatial relationship to the project site. (Data from DeFalco 2014).





Appendix F. “Modern” science’s rending of place into two “realms” and some of the geographers who have tried to address the resulting problematic.



Place provides an excellent framework to tackle one geography’s long-standing problems, one that is shared with “Modern” science in general: the nature-culture divide.

Study of place begins with an individual’s personal “sense-of-place”. While sensory perceptions of the world are undeniably mediated by a variety of preconceptions and conditionings, this utterly subjective stance is representative of the human experience. Everything in a place is involved in this sense, whether we document it or not, and everything influences how we will move ahead with research.

The most profound disruption in research occurs when the researcher is required to put sensed-place through the filter of modern western scientific process.

It is at this moment that place is rendered into two realms: the socio-cultural realm, purview of human geographers, and realm of “nature”, inert and without agency, studied by physical geographers.

Over the years, human geographers have researched space and place from one side of this dichotomy. Their observations have continued to affirm the role of place in geographic study, as well as occasionally pushing at the nature-culture boundary when they weren't satisfied by answers falling cleanly on "their" side.

Yi-Fu Tuan's research into the embodied and sensuous geographic relationships of place tests the line between human and place by insisting that place cannot exist without the human sensory relationship, and humans cannot be whole unless we experience strong relationships with place.

Allan Pred looked at the formation of place, in both space and time, as a co-creative process between individual agency and structured social formations, opening the door for later geographers' research into non-human agency and material-semiotics.

Though not a geographer, sociologist Henri Lefebvre wrote much on the topic of space, and his treatise on the social production of space helped open that subject—once firmly within the realm of "nature"—to critical analysis by human geographers.

Similarly, geographer David Harvey and others have shown clearly that the very idea of "nature" is a socially-constructed one, rather than some reality existing out there, waiting to be discovered.

But throughout all of this research, a concern that something is missing has continued to crop up. Canadian geographer Edward Relph decried what he called an encroaching "placelessness" driven by capitalism and globalization. Despite using inflammatory words like "authenticity" to bolster his arguments about place, Relph's message still resonates because its root causes remain invisible when viewed through the bipolar lens of modernity.

It is here that I introduce two tools from outside geography in an attempt to reunify our sense of place. From the small but vociferous discipline of the Social Studies of Science I offer material-semiotic theory, representatives of which include Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway. Traditional Ecological Knowledge, or TEK, comes mainly from anthropology, ethno-botany and indigenous studies. Ann Garibaldi and Gregory Cajete are examples of researchers who are working to expand understanding and application of TEK in natural resource co-management and eco-cultural restoration projects.

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